

Record

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Drillers, speakers show skills at tourney

By Tony Martin
Associate Editor

The 2005 Mississippi state Bible Drills and Speaker's Tournament attracted hundreds from across the state for a day of friendly competition April 16 at First Church, Clinton.

Students competing at this level have made it through the preliminary tournaments and face peers who are just as well-prepared and confident as they are. Much like a sporting event, participants had parents, family, and friends rooting them on.

The state Bible Drills and Speaker's Tournament are sponsored each year by the Discipleship and Family Ministries (DFM) Department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB), and funded by gifts to the Mississippi Cooperative Program.

While the Speaker's Tournament doesn't typically have the level of participation of the Bible Drills, the opportunity is a stellar one for students who want to grow toward Christian maturity and develop life skills. This year's winners included Kristin Glaze, First Church, Clinton, first place; Tyler Clemons, Delay Church, Oxford, second place; Sara Kyzar, First Church, Clinton, third place; and Brian Murphy, Fairview Church, Columbus, fourth place.

Scholarships from Mississippi Baptist-affiliated colleges are significant: Blue Mountain College (BMC) in Blue Mountain offers full tuition and board for eight consecutive semesters to the first place winner, rooming for eight semesters to the second and third place winners, and \$500 divided equally between the first two semesters for the fourth place winner. Mississippi College (MC) in Clinton offers room and



TOP SPEAKERS — Speaker's Tournament winners included (from left) Brian Murphy, Fairview Church, Columbus, fourth place; Sara Kyzar, First Church, Clinton, third place; Tyler Clemons, Delay Church, Oxford, second place; and Kristin Glaze, First Church, Clinton, first place. (BR photo by Tony Martin)

board for four years to the first place winner, and room or board for the second, third, and fourth place winners. MC also offers a one-time scholarship of \$500 to the winner in each associational competition.

"I plan to go to MC," said Murphy. "I was the only speaker in my association, so I received the \$500 scholarship. I'm interested in missions, so that's why I chose the topic I did: Missions — Crossing the sea or seeing the cross?"

"The hardest part of the speech was writing it," said Glaze. "It helped to have had a year of experience."

"I believe God led me to give the speech I did," said Kyzar. "I was really influenced by The Purpose-Driven Life, and God used that to inspire me."

"Putting a speech together really helps you determine where you are," said Clemons. "It will challenge your faith."

The rewards for the high school seniors participating in the scholarship Bible Drill are no less significant. In order to qualify, participants must have competed in Bible Drills for nine years. BMC offers full tuition and room scholarship for full-time freshmen for the first place winner, and room scholarship for second and third place winners. MC offers four-year room and board scholarship for the first place winner, and four-year room

scholarship for second and third place winners.

Winners in the Scholarship Drill were Chris Ferguson, Oakhurst Church, Clarksdale; Chris Burnam, Pelahatchie Church, Pelahatchie; and Micah Mitchell, First Church, Sumrall.

The Junior High tournament was also featured, and consisted of students in grades seven through nine. Winners are invited to show their skills at Gulfshore Assembly and at Super Summer each summer. Junior High winners were Jennifer Varner, First Church, Madison, first place; Ethan Wilson, Mt. Pisgah Church, Eupora, second place; and Katelyn Sappington, Liberty Church, New Albany, third place.

The purpose of the Youth Bible Drill is to challenge youth to develop skills in using their Bible — locating books, verses, and passages dealing with doctrinal and ethical concerns. The Speaker's Tournament is designed to stimulate growth toward Christian maturity, challenging youth to think seriously about their Christian commitment and to express that commitment verbally. Both programs help develop poise and confidence.

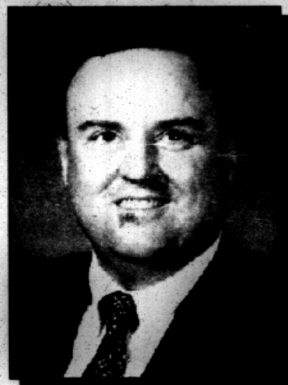
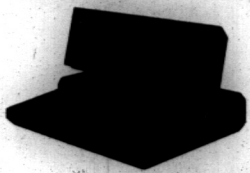
For more information on the drills and tournaments, contact Don Hicks, DFM consultant, MBCB, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Telephone: (601) 292-3287 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651, ext. 287. E-mail: dhicks@mbcb.org.

JUNIOR HIGH TOURNAMENT WINNERS — Winners in the Junior High Bible Drill tournament were (from left) Jennifer Varner, First Church, Madison; Ethan Wilson, Mt. Pisgah Church, Eupora; and Katelyn Sappington, Liberty Church, New Albany. (BR photo by Tony Martin)



SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS — Three students won scholarships at the Scholarship Drill at First Church, Clinton, on April 16. Pictured from left are Marcus Peagler, director of Discipleship and Family Ministry at the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board; Micah Mitchell, First Church, Sumrall, third place; Chris Burnam, Pelahatchie Church, Pelahatchie, second place; Chris Ferguson, Oakhurst Church, Clarksdale, first place; and Jim Turcotte, vice president for enrollment services at Mississippi College. (BR photo by Tony Martin)

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In the hands of an angry news media

The recent elevation of German Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger to succeed the late Pope John Paul II as leader of the Roman Catholic Church has once again opened the dialogue on the vast differences between how Catholics and Protestants perceive and practice the Christian faith. Even a casual student of Catholic/Protestant theology and doctrine can see that a tremendous chasm exists between the two faith systems. Baptists are probably farther apart from Catholics than most groups.

As great as are the divisions between Catholics and Protestants, however, one inescapable conclusion can be drawn from the 24/7 coverage of the papal events of the past month — this country's dominant news media outlets despise us equally. That's so because they despise anyone or any group that would stand in opposition to their movement to completely secularize American society.

Far from the journalistic ideal of telling the whole story from all sides and then allowing readers, listeners, and viewers to decide, the national news media are on a crusade to muscle unacceptable religious activity (translation: conservative religious activity) to the margins as they praise abortion, euthanasia, homosexual marriage, and a host of other radical secular ideas that put them in conflict with a majority of Americans.

Take a look at just a few of the headlines promulgated by major secular news organizations, only hours after the announcement of the new pope. Decide for yourself:

- "A divided church awaits Pope Benedict" — Newsweek magazine
- "Cardinal Ratzinger divides Germans" — Associated Press
- "New pope a guardian of orthodoxy" — Washington Post



- "New pope was a stern guardian of orthodoxy" — Reuters
- "Church to maintain hard line" — Associated Press
- "New pope was Vatican's cardinal in charge of doctrinal crackdowns" — The Tampa Tribune

Such reporting suggests the worst possible outcome of the election of this new pope is that he will seek to adhere to church doctrine and — horrors! — attempt to maintain some moral order in the world through his church. According to the above news outlets and many others that followed the same talking points, the result of such a "hard line" will inevitably be a "divided church."

The previous role of Cardinal Ratzinger — now Pope Benedict XVI — as prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith seems to draw the most consternation. The news media have described his role there as the "Enforcer," and "God's Rottweiler."

"A day before he was elected pope, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger made clear the type of church he wanted: one that rigidly maintained the doctrines he himself had upheld as guardian of church orthodoxy, where there were absolute truths on matters such as abortion, celibacy and homosexuality."

"With his election Tuesday in one of the fastest papal votes in a century, Pope Benedict XVI will most certainly build upon the uncompromising hard line on doctrine that he charted under Pope John Paul II," said Associated Press analyst Nicole Winfield.

When was the last time anyone remembers the news media referring to the "hard line" homosexual agenda, "rigid" Muslim theology, or "controversial" liberal ideas? Such negative descriptions are reserved almost entirely for Christians, conservatives, and Christian conservatives.

We have grown accustomed to their slander, but it still sometimes shocks the conscience. Syndicated columnist Cynthia Tucker of The Atlanta Constitution-Journal recently criticized James Dobson, a conservative Christian and founder of Focus on the Family in Colorado Springs, Co., for having the audacity to get involved in the public affairs of this country.

"These extremists have much in common with the jihadist wing of Islam," she wrote. Really? Perhaps Tucker should compare the body counts of Focus on the Family and Al Qaeda, but such pseudo-journalists have never allowed cold, hard facts to get in the way of their agenda.

Who are the "rigid extremists," after all?

Let us not be distracted from our overarching goal of fulfilling the Great Commission, no matter the personal cost (Matt. 28:18-20). If the whole world be against us, we must remain true to our calling. After what Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, endured for us, it is the least we can do for Him.

Find a successful business and you've probably discovered a company that understands supply and demand, the economic principle that certain businesses supply or provide the goods and services that consumers demand or want.

The greater the demand, the greater the opportunity to supply the desired goods and services and the more likely the company will make a handsome profit. It's a basic — but important — business principle.

For example, take Apple's iPod. This pocket-sized jukebox has exploded in popularity in the past six months with several million units sold. Its popularity has truly influenced our culture. Owners are never separated from their music collection, with the most advanced models of the easy-to-use iPod holding as many as 15,000 songs.

Evangelicals need a basic business lesson. Research shows that evangelicals are not supplying the Gospel in a manner that matches the public's demand. As a result, we are missing the opportunity to realize exponential growth in our churches, which of course means exponential Kingdom growth.

A recent MSNBC/Newsweek online survey asked readers the following question: "Do you believe that Jesus rose from the dead after the crucifixion?" Eighty-one percent of those who

GUEST OPINION:



The spiritual side of supply & demand

By Jimmy Draper, president
LifeWay Christian Resources
Nashville

answered responded "yes," while 13% responded "no" and another six percent responded "I don't know."

Eighty-one percent is a significant number. It reflects other research showing that the population at large is searching for meaning in life. This has been spotlighted by publicity surrounding Ashley Smith reading Rick Warren's Purpose Driven Life to Brian Nichols following his killing of an Atlanta judge and other law enforcement officers.

One out of every three adults in America is unchurched, according to a March 28 study released by the Barna Group. The report indicates that the number has held consistent over the past five years but because of population growth, the number of unchurched adults continues to grow annually by nearly a million people. A large percentage of

these adults are spiritually active, but of the 56% who consider themselves to be Christians, only 15% have made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ.

Sadly, according to a previously released Barna Group study, fewer than half (46%) of the Protestant senior pastors surveyed listed evangelism and outreach as a ministry priority. Spiritual development finished No. 1 at 47%. (Sixty percent of Southern Baptist pastors place evangelism as their top priority).

Spiritual development is important, but it is not the primary purpose of the church. Spiritual development often becomes egocentric and many churches focus growth inward. We have seen a renewed interest in discipleship — which is good — and we thought that if believers were disciplined they would be automatically strong witnesses and become more evangelistic.

Sadly, this has not proven to be the case. We've turned churches into comfortable country clubs for members when, in fact, the purpose of the church is to reach those who are not members. Evangelism is the proper expression of mature, or disciplined believers.

The evangelical church in America is losing ground when it comes to effecting change in our culture. Instead of a trend in our nation toward godliness, the trend is toward secularism devoid of anything godly. Western Christianity has retreated from the battle for the souls of men to the hollow pursuit of self-comfort. We have missed the boat because we think Christianity is about getting our needs met. It is not. It's about God and His Kingdom coming on earth as it is in heaven.

Supply and demand isn't just an economic principle; it's a biblical principle as well. Jesus identified the disparity between the demand and the supply in Matthew 9:37, but we've been slow to respond. There's still time, but we have to wonder: What's our final grade going to be in spiritual economics?

Draper has announced his retirement as president of LifeWay Christian Resources in Nashville. His commentary appears courtesy of Baptist Press.

Rick Warren announces global initiative

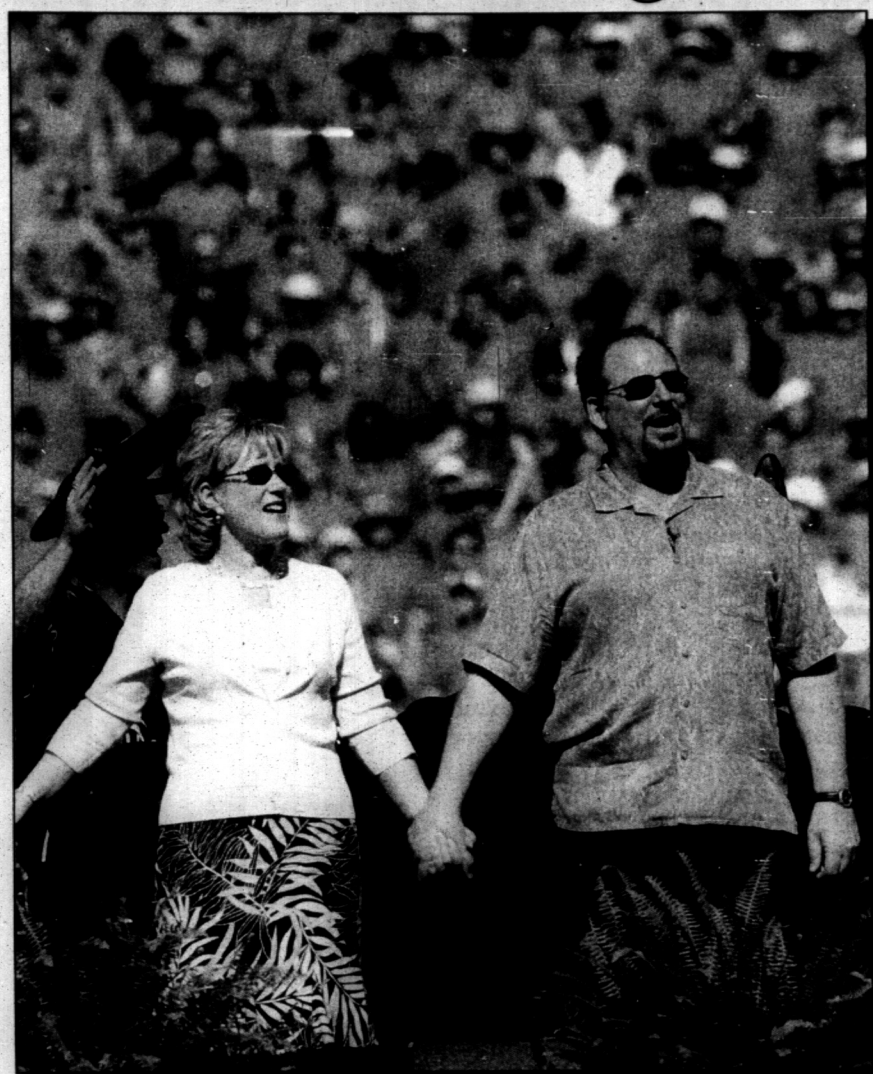
ANAHEIM, Calif. (BP) — Thousands of churches around the world will be setting out to eradicate five "giant problems" that oppress billions of people, Rick Warren told a crowd of 30,000 celebrating Saddleback Valley Community Church's 25th anniversary April 17 at Angel Stadium in Anaheim, Ca.

"Billions of people suffer each day from problems so big no government can solve them," said Warren, Saddleback's pastor. "The only thing big enough to solve the problems of spiritual emptiness, selfish leadership, poverty, disease and ignorance is the network of millions of churches all around the world."

Saddleback Church celebrated its 25th anniversary by combining the congregation's usual six weekend services into a single gathering at the stadium south of Los Angeles. It was the first time in many years members of the church family had been able to assemble at the same time. The event included greetings to the congregation from President George Bush and evangelist Billy Graham and featured music from Michael W. Smith, Salvador, and Tait.

Warren used the occasion to announce his vision of a spiritual awakening that would sweep the world as Christian churches tackle the problems that Jesus Himself confronted during His ministry.

"The Scripture shows us that Jesus shared the Good News, trained leaders, helped the poor, cared for the sick and taught the children,"



SILVER ANNIVERSARY — Rick Warren (right) and his wife Kay join in singing Amazing Grace at the close of Saddleback Church's 25th anniversary celebration and its launch of a global "P.E.A.C.E. plan" on April 17 at Angel Stadium in California. (BP photo courtesy of Purpose Driven Ministries)

Warren said. "Our P.E.A.C.E. plan will just do the five things Jesus did while He was here on earth."

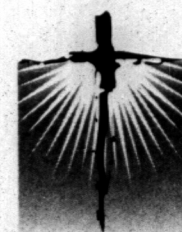
P.E.A.C.E. is an acronym that stands for "Plant churches, Equip servant leaders, Assist the poor, Care for the sick and Educate the next generation," Warren said. The emphasis calls for church-based small groups to adopt villages where spiritual emptiness, selfish leadership, poverty, disease and ignorance keep people from experiencing the kind of life God wants them to have, he said.

"There are thousands of villages in the world that have no school, no clinic, no business, no government — but they have a church," Warren said. "What would happen if we could mobilize churches to address those five global giants?"

Warren's "Purpose Driven" movement will be the vehicle for launching such an effort. A combined 23 million copies of his

books — "The Purpose-Driven Church" and "The Purpose-Driven Life" — have been sold, and more than 400,000 pastors in 162 countries have been trained in the "church health" principles that took Saddleback from seven people to more than 20,000 members in 25 years. Warren's approach organizes congregations into small groups that focus on the five biblical purposes of the church: worship, fellowship, discipleship, ministry and evangelism.

Saddleback's network of 2,600 small groups is starting the movement as each one adopts a village where it will seek to implement the P.E.A.C.E. plan. The congregation, based in Lake Forest, Calif., has been testing the plan over the past 18 months as 4,500 church members have been involved in pilot projects.



MISSISSIPPI
BAPTISTS

**THE
SECOND
FRONT PAGE**

Record THE BAPTIST

The official rollout of P.E.A.C.E. will focus on the small country of Rwanda in eastern Africa, where a million people were killed in a 100-day genocide in 1994. A recent visit to the country convinced Warren that Rwanda had the right qualities for what he called "the first model of national cooperation" between churches and a country's leaders.

Warren said he was impressed with the spiritual depth of Rwandan church leaders who opposed the genocide and have led the people into a "spirit of hope and reconciliation." He also said he believes God wants to begin something new in a small country that the world ignores.

Warren then introduced Rwandan President Paul Kagame as a "wonderful Christian leader" who has demonstrated his trustworthiness in rebuilding the country.

Kagame praised the P.E.A.C.E. plan as "a vision with a big goal... but one that also is simple in the strategy it proposes."

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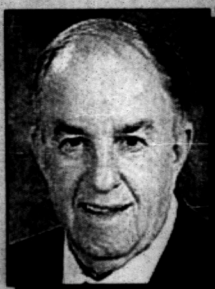
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Cathedrals founder dies

AKRON, Ohio (BP) — Legendary bass singer George Younce, a two-time inductee into the Southern Gospel Music Hall of Fame, died April 11 at Akron City Hospital in Ohio. He was 75 years of age. A founding member of the Cathedrals Quartet, Younce was selected 14 times in Singing News fan surveys as their favorite Southern Gospel bass singer. Younce had suffered from failing kidneys and a heart condition in recent years, the Akron Beacon Journal reported, and had retired in 2002 after collapsing during a Bill Gaither Homecoming concert at Carnegie Hall. His last public appearance, in September 2004, was as a surprise guest at a Bill Gaither event in Cleveland, the city's Plain Dealer newspaper reported. He sang his signature song about heaven, "Supper time," and told the crowd, "Should the Master come tonight, I'm packed and ready to go." He also released a solo project in 2004, Poetic Reflections, and three albums in 1999. A notice of Younce's death on the Cathedrals webpage stated, "We are sad and life will never be the same but we are happy for George. He had been so very sick and in much pain for the last few months but now he is healthier and happier than he has ever been." Younce was preceded in death by his longtime Cathedrals partner, lead singer Glen Payne, who died in October 1999 during the group's previously announced retirement year. The Cathedrals began in 1964 with Rex Humbard Ministries, which broadcast nationally from the Cathedral of Tomorrow in Akron. The group went out on their own in 1969. Younce's interest in Southern Gospel music was sparked at the age of 15 in his hometown of Patterson, N.C., as he began listening to radio programs featuring the Blue Ridge Quartet. The next year, he joined his first quartet. He was inducted into the Southern Gospel Music Hall of Fame both as a member of the Cathedrals and as a solo performer. He also is an inductee into the Gospel Music Hall of Fame. Younce and his wife, Clara, would have celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary April 27. Other survivors include a son, three daughters, and three grandchildren.



Younce

Looking back

10 years ago

Howell W. Todd is inaugurated as Mississippi College's 18th president. Todd pledges to nurture "guiding principles" at the school.

20 years ago

The last Baptist layman to serve as president of the Southern Baptist Convention, Owen Cooper of Yazoo City, pleads with churches not to participate in a threatened campaign by conservatives to withhold funds from the Southern Baptist Cooperative Program.

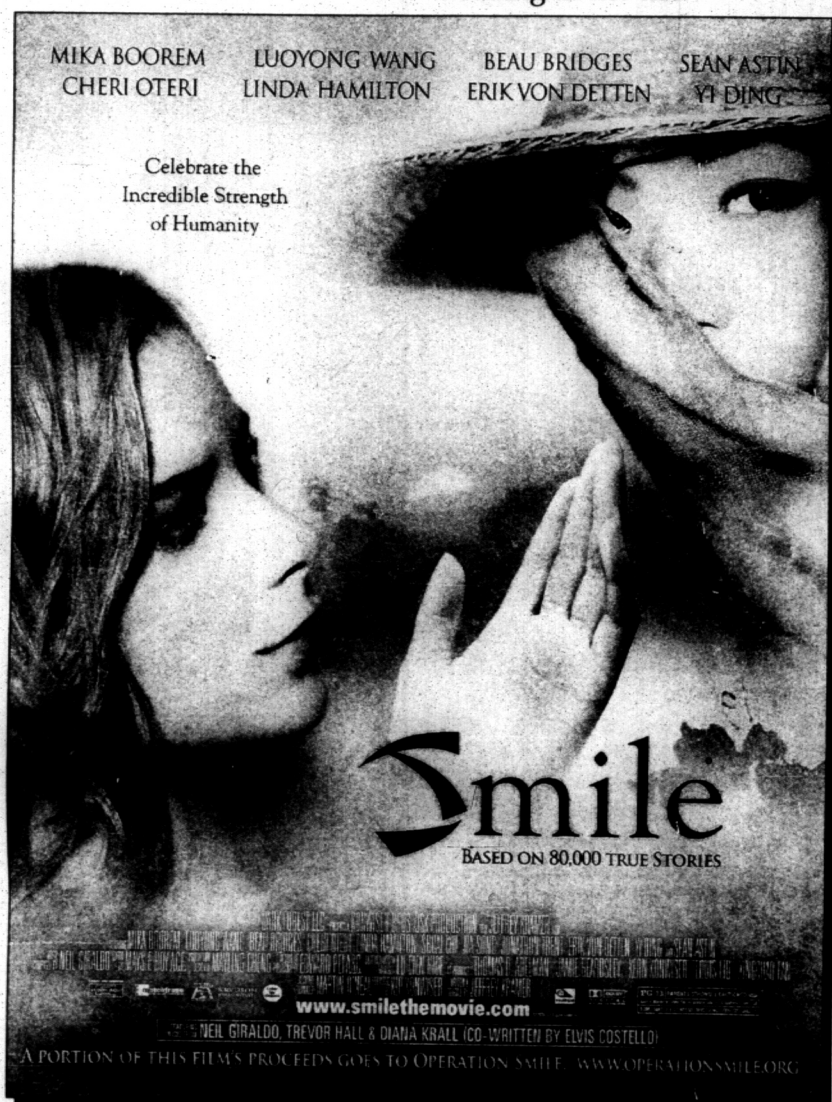
50 years ago

Harmony Church, Laurel, presents pastor T. E. Fant with a new Super 88 Oldsmobile. The church had just experienced its greatest revival in history, with 232 decisions made. The pastor's family also received a "light secondhand car."

Film gives Miss. Baptist a reason to 'Smile'

By William H. Perkins Jr.
Editor

They appear to be a true odd couple — the Baptist forester from south Mississippi and the New York University School of Film graduate from Hollywood — but what turned from a business relationship into a deep friendship has resulted in the production of a first-rate, uplifting movie about a teenager seeking to find deeper meaning in her life.



Forester Martin O'Neal, chairman of deacons at Perkinson Church, Perkinson, and actor/writer/director Jeff Kramer of Malibu, Ca., have collaborated to bring Smile to the big screen. The movie is based on the true story of Kramer's daughter Katie, who was transformed by her involvement with a charity organization named Operation Smile that provides the means for doctors to travel around the world repairing facial deformities such as cleft palates.

O'Neal, who met Kramer while negotiating to purchase a stake in the company that owns the rights to the library of work of the late Roy and Dale Rogers, said he signed on to produce the movie after reading Kramer's moving screenplay.

"The movie has two messages. The first message is that there is a bigger world out there than just the next prom. The second message is that teens can say no to sexual pressure. It seems that every movie these days portrays teens having sex. Katie, the film's lead character played by Mika Boorem (Mighty Joe

Young, Jack Frost, The Patriot, Blue Crush), finds something inside herself to refuse to have sex," said O'Neal.

As Katie struggles to define herself in a materialistic and self-centered world, she signs up to travel to China with Operation Smile. What she encounters during her sojourn to that ancient land, and the people she meets along the way, completely change the course of her life. A number of engaging subplots round out the movie's story line.

Starring with Boorem are film veterans Beau Bridges, Linda Hamilton, and Sean Astin.

Smile is O'Neal's first venture into film making. "Hollywood is different from Mississippi, but whether it's timber or movies the same principles of personal integrity should apply," said O'Neal, who grew up in and was baptized at First Church, McHenry.

"Smile is not aimed specifically at the Christian community, but I can tell you I'm not ashamed of the spiritual content of the movie," he said.

The movie was filmed in the interior of China over a four-month period in early 2004. The Chinese government, usually anxious about the portrayal of Chinese culture in foreign films, was so impressed with the final cut of the movie that it was shown at the March opening of the People's National Congress, the 8,000-member legislative body of the Chinese national government.

"As far as we know, Smile is the first foreign movie to ever gain that honored slot," O'Neal said. The film has also been accepted for screening at the Cannes Film Festival in France.

"Occasionally — it doesn't happen often — going to the movies serves our fellow man. Such is the case with an impressive little drama called Smile," said Christian entertainment critic Phil Boatwright in a recent Baptist Press review of the film.

"Writer Jeff Kramer has a gift for succinct dialogue while his pronounced directing skill seamlessly moves the narrative, giving the audience an engaging story. His adventure/drama quickly becomes involving, offering something for teens and adults alike," Boatwright observed.

"A portion of the film's proceeds will go to Operation Smile. Every time someone sees this movie in theaters, they will help a child. Wow," Boatwright added.

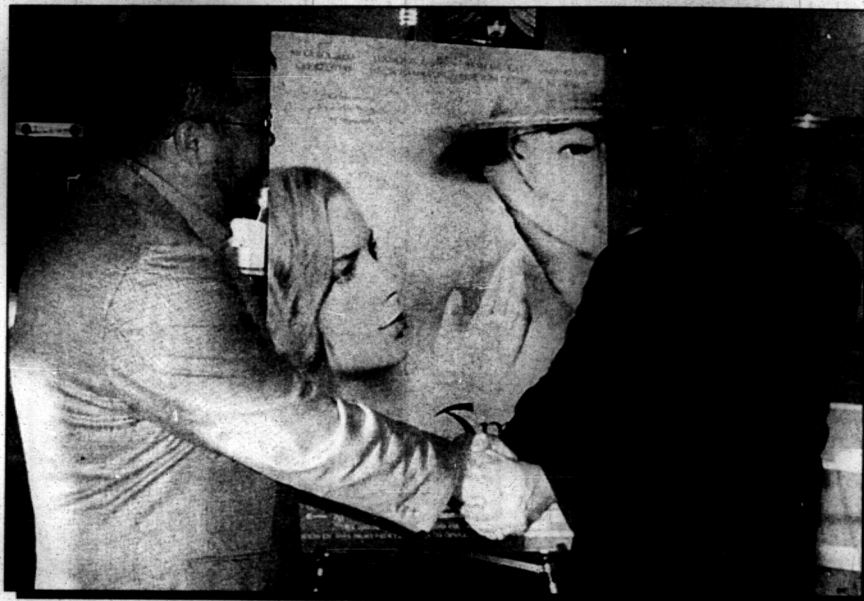
The film is rated PG-13, O'Neal said, because of the scenes in which Katie struggles to live out her uneasy decision not to have sex. "The movie has no nudity. There is no sexual content other than the scenes when Katie says 'no,' and those scenes were intentionally kept very mild," he said. The movie does con-

tain a smattering of vulgarities of the type used by some teenagers today.

"Most of us complain about the quality and content of the movies that Hollywood puts out these days. If we are really serious about that, we need to get out and go see Smile. If Christians in Mississippi support this film, it will have a

ripple effect as the movie is released into wider circulation," O'Neal said.

Smile is currently playing in California, Jackson, and the Mississippi Gulf Coast. For more information on the film, go to www.smilethemovie.com. A trailer of the film can be viewed free of charge at the web site.



BIG NIGHT — Martin O'Neal (left) and Jeff Kramer share a moment together at the Mississippi premiere of their movie Smile on April 21 at United Artists Parkway Theater in Flowood. O'Neal, a Mississippi Baptist, served as executive producer, while Kramer wrote and directed the film. (BR photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)

Baptist Minister to Host

Hawaii

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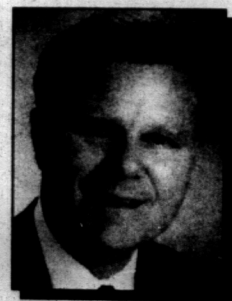
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Acronyms are taking over the world. According to the dictionary an acronym is "A word formed from the initial letters of a name, or a word formed by combining initial letters or parts of a series of words." You see them everywhere. Let me confess right up front that I hate acronyms as the title may indicate, but it seems as though the rest of the world is not only in love with them but virtually everybody is trying to produce them. They have become a part of our culture beyond anything I could ever imagine. They are a part of the way we think. You turn on the TV and there they are — NBC, CBS, ABC, CNN, and ESPN. In the world of academics you hear them daily — ACT, SAT, and MCAT. The colleges across our state are known as MC, BMC, WCC, MSU, USM, JSU, OM, and DSU to say nothing of all of our community colleges that range from NWCC to GCCC to JCJC. All of these kinds of configurations — NFL, NBA, WWF, SEC, NHL, dominate the sports world. Of course, there are the unbelievable different letter configurations of the government of the USA — IRS, SS, FBI, CIA, DHS, and that is hardly even a beginning.

When it comes to the small portion of the Kingdom of God that we serve in, we seem to have a unique ability to frame organizations, programs, and personnel into our own little world of acronyms. In fact, I have wondered if we are not



Directions

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

addicted in the SBC and the MBC also. Get some of us together and it want be long until somebody will be referring to the IMB, and/or NAMB, or talking about working with the AMDs, or the DOMs. Some of us remember the BYPU that then was the BTU, the TU, and the DT. It would not be odd or unusual to read an announcement in a church or an associational bulletin that went something like this: "The BSU from USM will be meeting in the FLC of FBC before DT on Sunday." Consider this possible news announcement: "Our AMD has called a meeting of the OMC Steering Committee to discuss what should be done because so many churches will be having VBS and other groups attending GBA at the same time the OMC has been scheduled. The WMU discovered the problem and has raised concerns that many of the RAs and GAs would not be able to attend."

Many of you who are thoughtful, alert, and knowledgeable Baptists understand that we have created our own code language, our insider understanding to the degree

that for other folks, especially new members and interested non-members, they need to wade through a dictionary to understand what we are saying. The only problem is there is no such book of definitions and either they just have to hang around until they can figure it out like the rest of us have or just remain in the dark wondering what is going on and why. It does not get any better in the SBC as we promote EKG, EE, CWT, and even FAITH.

Maybe it is just me and my limited capacity to quickly understand, interpret, and analyze all of these letters, but I do not believe I am alone. I get confused, and I have been a Southern Baptist all of my life. I went to Southern Baptist schools. In fact, I am a graduate of CMC and BMC, attended SWBTS, and have an MDiv. and DMin. from NOBTS, and I still get confused. But I do have a solution that I would like to offer. It is a two-part solution that might offer some relief.

The first part of the solution I offer with tongue in cheek is to encourage everyone to join EIIAAAA. This is a new group

that just possibly could make a difference. Now so that you want be confused this new group, EIIAAAA, that sounds like the John Dean scream, stands for Everyone Interested In An Assault Against Acronyms!

Honestly, we can make a difference. How? Here is the deal. Instead of simplifying everything into these complicated solutions, we can easily implement this by not using acronyms and simply state, restate, and say what we mean. It actually only takes approximately the same breath to say Southern Baptist Convention as it does to say SBC. It is easy to say Empowering Kingdom Growth so that everyone in the group will understand rather than saying EKG and they think they are having a heart attack. The simple practice of the EIIAAAA is that we will use words rather than letters. Will this help? I do not know. It may not help anybody other than me, but I think that it is worth the effort. I think there is power and clarification in talking about the International Mission Board and what it is accomplishing and referring to the North American Mission Board and what it is doing across the land. Just think about it, and you may want to join also. Thank you!

JRF/EXDIRTR/MBCB

Oops!

The author may be contacted at
P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. E-mail: jfutral@mbcb.org.



YOU CAN RESPOND
RIGHT NOW!

Simply share the following prayer
with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Jesus Christ today, contact a local Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

Adkins retires, returns to pastoring he loves

By Tony Martin
Associate Editor

S.A. "Sonny" Adkins resigned as Director of Evangelism for the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, effective March 31, to accept the call to his first love: the pastorate.

Adkins, who will pastor Newhebron Church, Newhebron, served as the state evangelism director for nine years.

He pastored first at Avera Church, Greene County, in 1961, serving there for "a little over a year while I was a student at William Carey College," Adkins said.

"From there I went to Centerville, over in Tylertown, and we were there almost two years while I was in seminary. From there we went to Edna, in Marion County, for two-and-a-half years, then to Calvary in Silver Creek, my first church out of seminary. That was like my first love — it was so precious and sweet. Scott, my oldest son, was born there, and we were there over three years.

"People came in right and left. We grew from about 80 to 135, and the little church had never seen anything like it. They didn't know what they were doing, and I didn't know what I was doing, but God just blessed. It was like a love affair."

From there Adkins went to Central Church, McComb, for about two years, then to Springhill Avenue Church, in Mobile, Ala. "We had 126 additions the first year we were there, but it wasn't an easy church," said Adkins.

He returned to Mississippi and pastored Rocky Creek in Lucedale. The church became the largest rural church in the state.

"From that, in 1977, I went into full-time evangelism, and moved to Newhebron."

Adkins was in vocational evangelism until 1984. "The Lord gradually revealed to me His desire to have me in vocational evangelism, beginning while in Mobile. I told the Lord, 'If You want me in full-time evangelism, You're going to have to call to my wife [Jean] as well.'"

"We surrendered to evangelism a year before we actually started, and I remember like it was yesterday when we knelt down by the bed in the parsonage and prayed, 'Lord, we'll go where You want us to go and do what You want us to do.'"

"You've got to be a little off your rocker to do something like that," Adkins said. "I had two little boys, and we went from the largest rural church in Mississippi to nothing, with a salary of zero. God walked us through seven years where my wife Jean was teaching school, and we never missed a meal, or a car payment, or a house payment. God affirmed it over and over again, that we'd done the right thing."

Adkins contracted diabetes, and the doctors told him that he would have to "get off the road." So in 1984, Adkins went as pastor to Newhebron Church. "Jean was on the search committee, and she had to resign so they could call me as pastor."



Adkins

From Newhebron Church, Adkins went to pastor of Forest Church, Forest, and in 1996, Bill Causey, then executive director-treasurer of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, "took me to lunch and asked me to serve as evangelism director. I had no clue. I never thought about it. He gave me two days to think about it. I started May 1, 1996."

On reflecting on his time as director of evangelism, Adkins stated, "I honestly can't think of any low points during my time here, but if I were to try to single out any high points, our Bible distribution — when we distributed more than 600,000 copies of God's word in the state — was a real highlight."

"Our Hispanic revivals — the first time we went to a language group — and seeing people saved nightly for two weeks was a highlight, and to start our evangelism emphasis to our fishermen, to the motorcycle rally in Sturgis, all these things really stick with me."

"The joy I've experienced in being in so many churches for revivals has been a blessing, too. It's been a great, great time."

Adkins also cited his ministry assistants, Patsy Sheffield and Elaine Smith, and his former associates who are serving in other areas of the convention board, Ed Deuschle and Don Lum.

"I couldn't have asked for better co-workers," he said.

"I've been treated so well here," Adkins said. "I may be the dullest knife in the drawer, but to think God would give me an opportunity like this just blows my mind."

Bibliocipher

By Charles Marx, 1932 - 2004
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ERXI, D ERXSRJN, XJU
OZSR RXI, D RXICE: KDI
CER GDIU EXCE NLDFRJ,
Z EXSR JDMIZNERU XJU
WIDMOEC ML VEZGUIRJ,
XJU CERH EXSR
IRWRGGRU XOZJNC QR.

ZNXZXE DJR:CAD

Clue: E = H

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Proverbs Eight:Eleven.

JUST FOR THE RECORD



1. Annie Armstrong Offering, Pine Burr Church, Columbia

1. **Pine Burr Church, Columbia**, exceeded their \$1,000.00 goal by raising \$1,616.64 for the Annie Armstrong Easter offering. Shown is Hannah Sones placing her \$118.38 collection into the basket.

2. **Fellowship Church, Smith County**, ordained Kevin Amason as deacon on March 15. Shown with Amason are his wife Krista, son Trevor and Glen Smith, pastor.

3. **Northcrest Church, Meridian**, ordained five new deacons on April 10. Shown from left: Michael Phillips, Robby Beasley, Kevin Hatcher, Kelly Williams, Ben Shirley, and Malcolm Lewis, pastor.

4. Bible drillers from **Cairo Church, Ecu** recently completed their church, associational, and state drills. Shown are the participants.

5. **Park Place Church, Brandon**, congratulates the children and youth who participated in Bible Drill. Shown, left to right, front row: Hannah Rogers and Kameron Smylie. Second row: Blaire Hill, Katelyn Lee, Abby Dominy, Blake Hill, and Matthew Clark.

Third row: Lee Jennings, Rob Jackson, Dane Jennings, Hope Jennings, and Andy Jackson.

6. Members of the Salt and Light Sunday School Class, **Clarke-Venable Church, Newton**, shipped military items to soldiers in Iraq. Helping to pack the items are, front, Racheal Blackledge; second row, from left, Russ Thompson, Will Thompson, John-Samuel Daily, Charlotte Griffin, and Billy Pierce; back row, from left, Jackie Sue Etie, Emily Williams, Shelia Stamper, and Linda Pierce.

8. **Fredonia, New Albany**, received \$18,111.46 for the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering. The church goal was \$4000.

9. **Castlewoods, Brandon**, will sponsor the Ramblin' Road Trip Vacation Bible School June 5-9, 6:30-8:30 p.m. For information, call Stacy Tingle at (601) 992-9977 or (601) 919-8819.

10. Travis Meadows will be in concert at **Goodwater, Magee**, April 30, 7 p.m., with refreshments following. A love offering will be taken.



2. Deacon Ordination, Fellowship Church, Smith County



3. Deacon Ordination, Northcrest Church, Meridian



4. Bible Drillers, Cairo Church, Ecu



6. Salt and Light Sunday School, Clarke-Venable Church, Newton

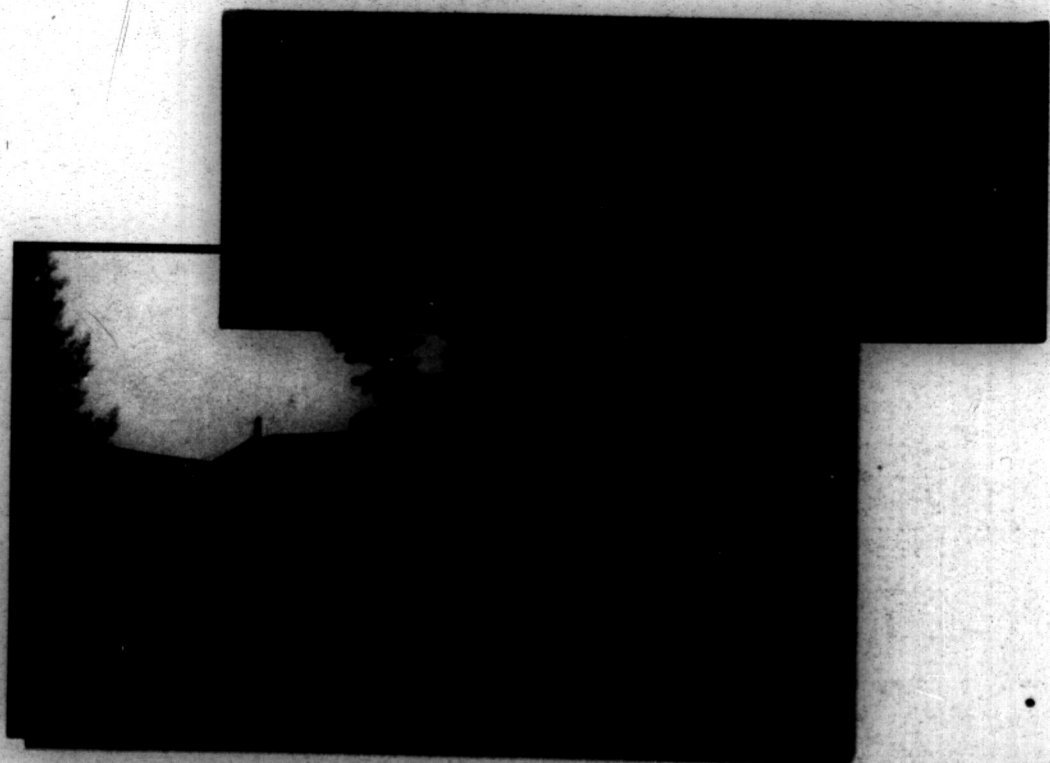
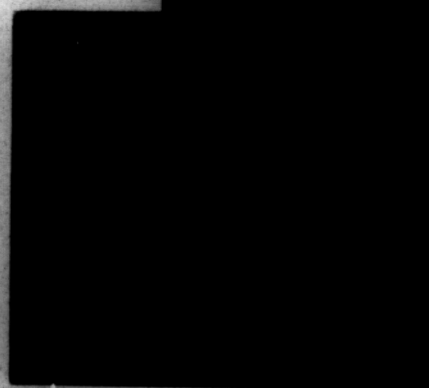
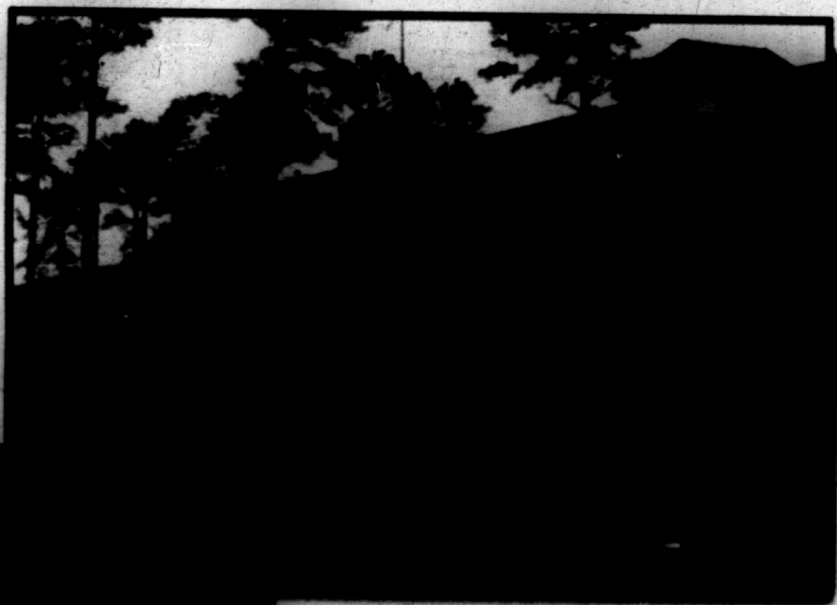
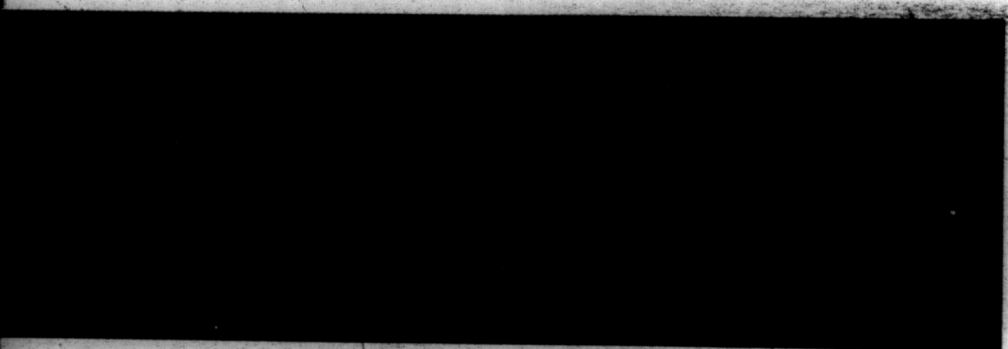
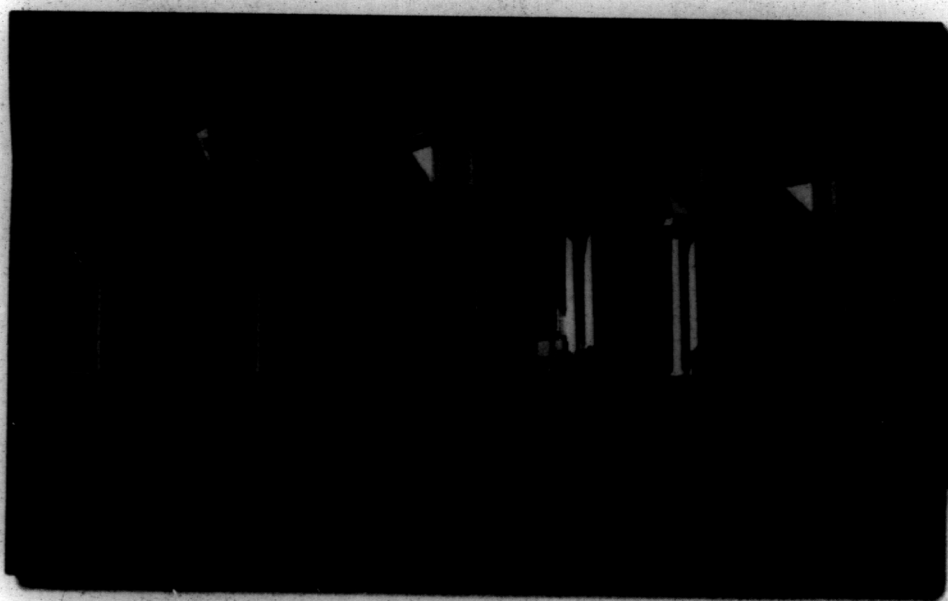
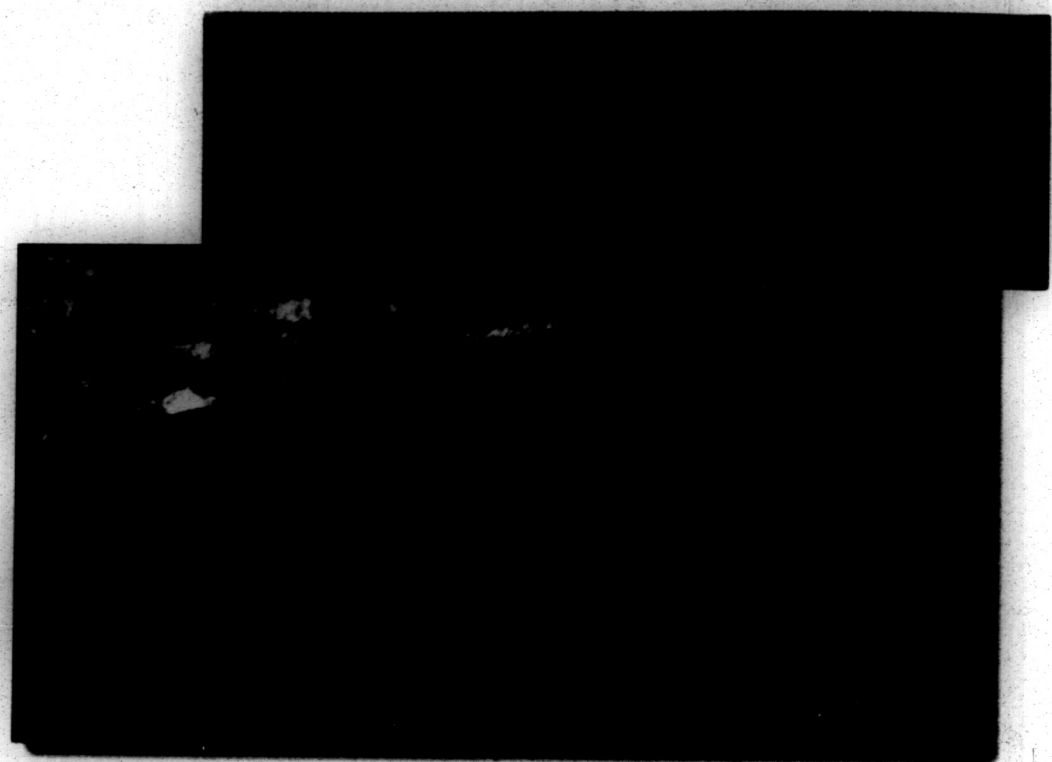
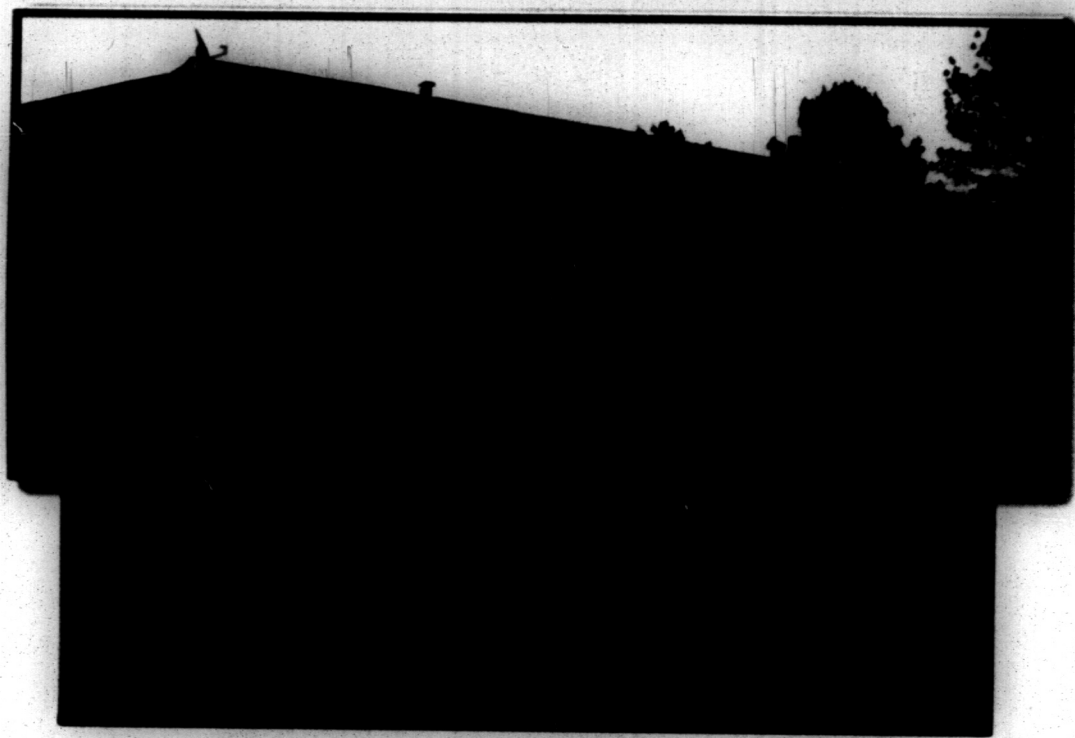


5. Bible Drillers, Park Place, Brandon

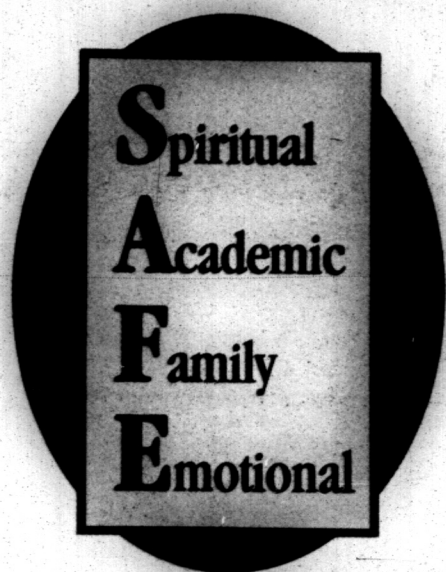
The Baptist Children's Village



THE BAPTIST CHI



CHILDREN'S VILLAGE

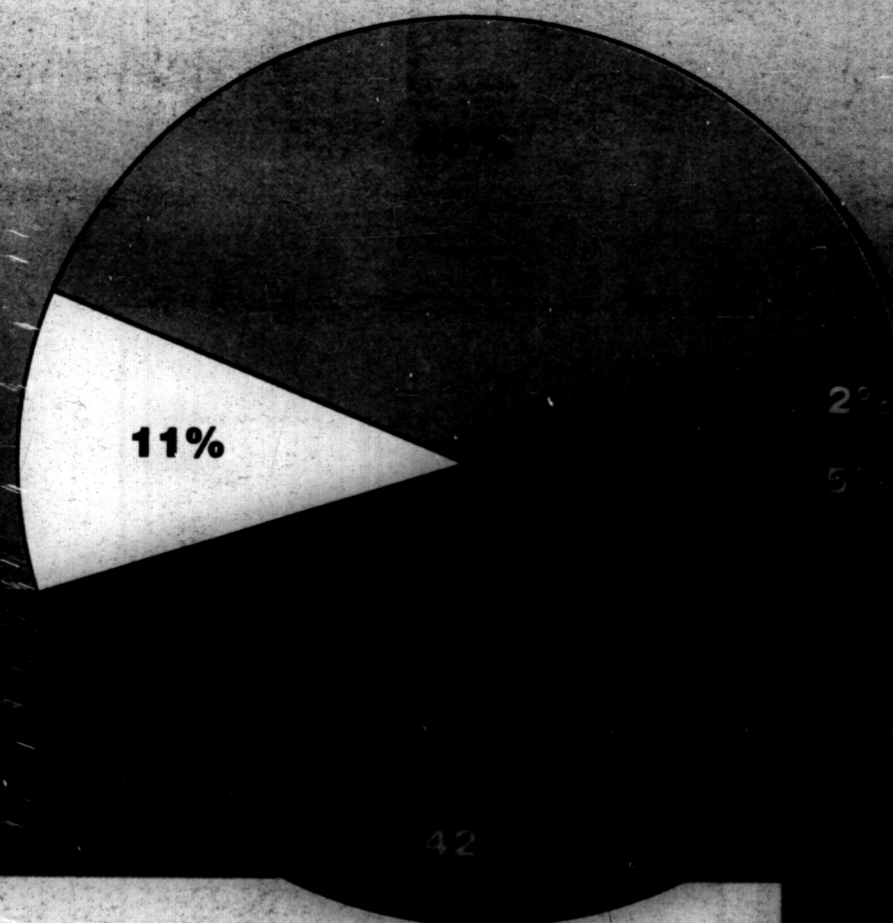


An individual plan of care is made for each child that comes into the ministry of The Baptist Children's Village. Staff work together to place every child on a S.A.F.E. Track, accessing and building a strong foundation in each of four critical areas-Spiritual, Academic, Family and Emotional.

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● Investment (endowments)

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This is just one of the fun activities you will find in the VBS packet to help you educate your VBS children and your church about the ministries of The Baptist Children's Village. The packets include lesson plans, mission stories, project ideas and more fun activities.

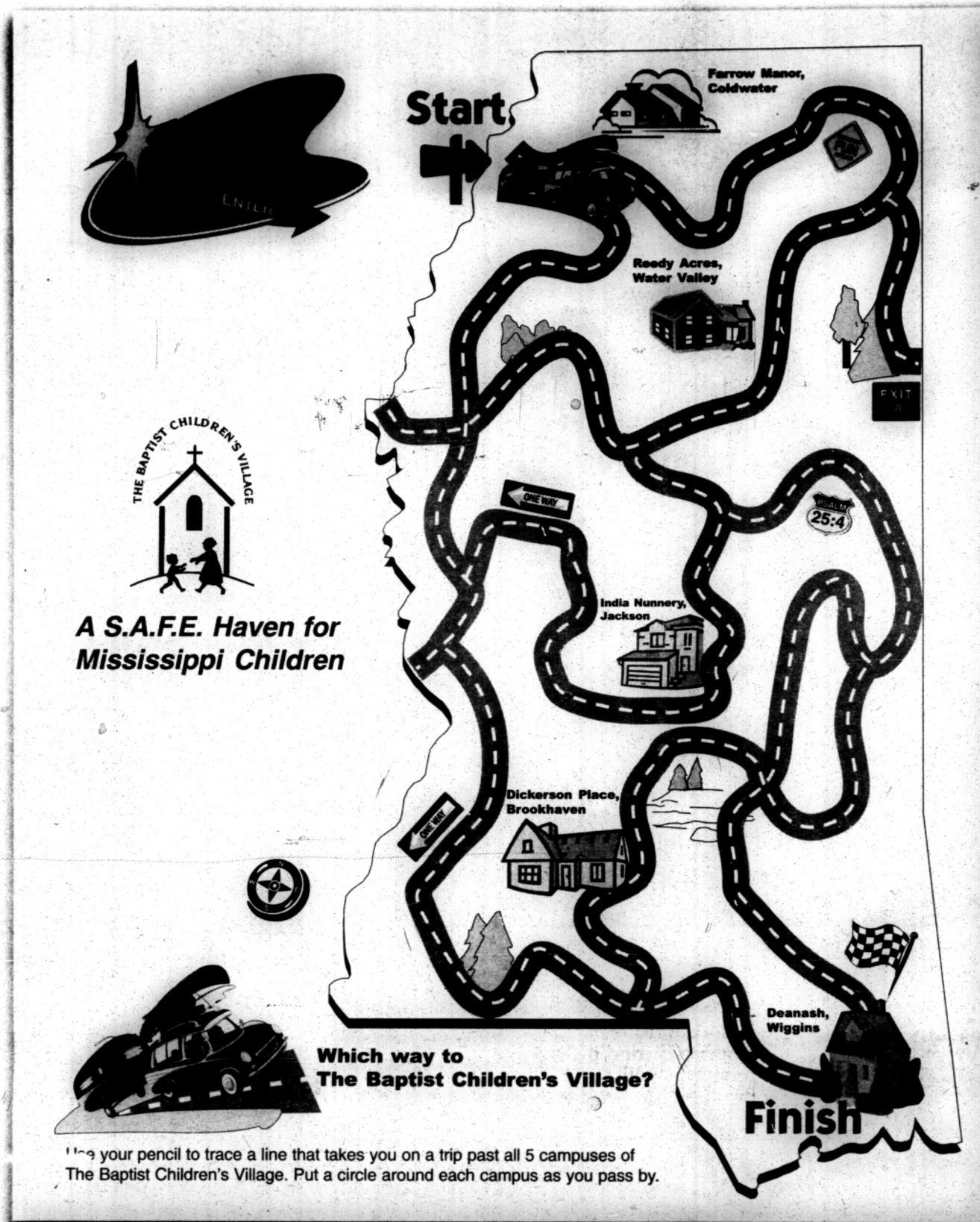
For information contact:

Celeste Cade

Public Relations Associate

ccade@baptistchildrensvillage.com or

601.922.2242.



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JUST FOR THE RECORD



11. Centennial Celebration, Grace Memorial Church, Gulfport

11. **Grace Memorial, Gulfport**, celebrated their centennial Jan. 22-23. Shown are the participants.

12. Members of the **First Church, Terry**, youth group volunteered Good Friday at Crestwood New Life Church in Jackson helping with an Easter egg hunt and other activities. Shown, from left, are Sarah Little, Lacey Jackson, Brittany Peets, Michelle Chase, Danielle Moss, and Blaire Whitehead.

13. **Center Grove, Oktibbeha County**, will host an annual memorial service May 8, 10:45 for their 125th anniversary. David Hamilton, Pontotoc, guest speaker.

14. The youth team of **Kokomo Church, Kokomo**, presented Showdown at the Easter Corral, a presentation of the Easter story in a very different form. Shown are the students in performance.

15. **Pleasant Hill, Calhoun Association**, held a ladies & girls vs. men & boys cake cook-off. Winners include, from left, Alecia McGonagill, Holly McGonagill, Susan Keeton, Barbie Keeton, Dustin Keeton, and Danny Spratlin, pastor (winning Worst Disaster.)

16. **Holly Church, Alcorn Association**, were lead in worship during their Easter program by Jill Haley, Krissy Bradley, Molly Morrow,

Hollie Butler, Haley Knepp, Shannon Bugg, and Hannah Conaway, who signed the song, Redeemer.

17. **Holly Church, Alcorn Association**, state Bible drill participants, include Jake Haley, Jordan Dickson, Amber Bradley, Shannon Bugg, Haley Knepp, and Krissy Bradley. Tony Morrow is pastor.

18. **Shiloh Church, Sontag**, honored GAs with a recognition service on Sept. 12.

19. The children's choir of **Friendship, Aberdeen**, will present the musical It's Cool in the Furnace May 1, 7 p.m.

20. **Newhebron Church, Lawrence County**, congratulates their children who participated in the state Bible drills. Shown, left to right, are: Georgie Walker, leader-Rena Cone, Brent Newsom, Kelly Bonner, Kristen Cone, Hannah Stephens, Ryan Williams, and Jennifer Bonner.

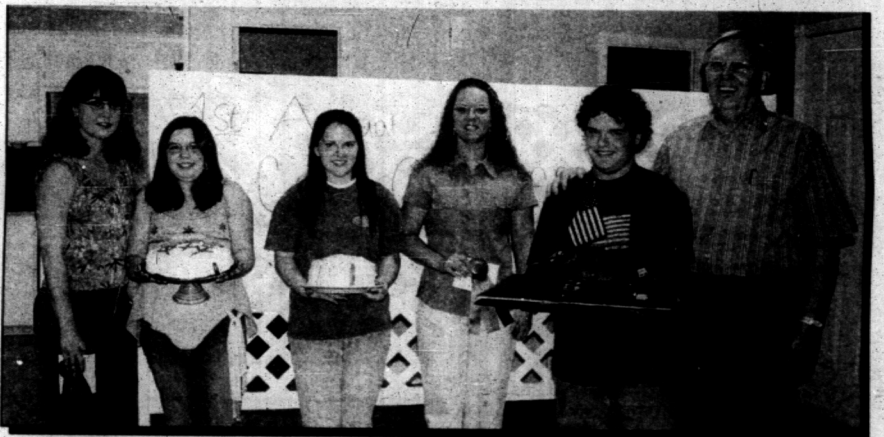
21. **Newhebron Church, Lawrence County**, congratulates their youth who participated in the state Bible drills. Shown, left to right, are: Kim Westmoreland, Corey Riley, and Glenda Westmoreland-leader.



12. Youth Group, First Church, Terry



14. Showdown at the Easter Corral, Kokomo Church, Kokomo



15. Cake Cook-Off, Holly Church, Alcorn Association



17. Bible Drill Participants, Holly Church, Alcorn Association



18. GA Recognition, Shiloh Church, Sontag

REVIVALS & HOMECOMINGS

Mashulaville Church, Mashulaville: Homecoming, Sun., May 1, 11:00 a.m. Bobby Parish, speaker. Music with Kay Robertson, Louisville, with pianist Benny Otis, Milton, Fla., and organist Billy McCully, Louisville. Lunch to follow in the fellowship hall.

First Church, Magnolia: Revival, May 1-4. Sun., 11: a.m. and 6:00 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., 6:30 p.m.; Gene Douglas, evangelist; Tim King, music; Barry Ward, pastor.

West End, West Point: Revival, May 1-4; Sunday, 6 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., 7 p.m.; Gregg Thomas, Corinth, evangelist; Steve Reynolds, Macon, music; Mike Mathena, pastor.

Riverside, Pascagoula: Revival, May 15-18; Sunday, 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., 7 p.m.; Terry Long, guest speaker; Tracy Martin, pastor.

Steep Hollow, Poplarville: Revival, May 29-June 1; Sunday School, 9:45 a.m.; Sun., 8:30 a.m., 11 a.m., and 6 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., 7 p.m.; Rick Coram, speaker; Shannon Marshall, pastor.



20. Children Bible Drillers, Newhebron Church, Lawrence County

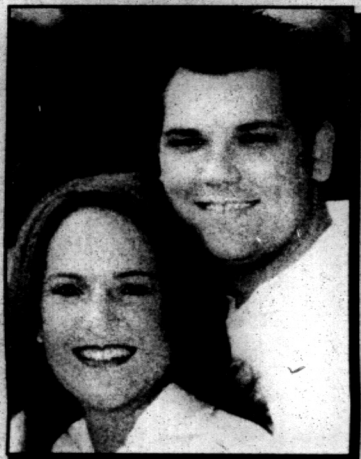


21. Youth Bible Drillers, Newhebron Church, Lawrence County

STAFF CHANGES

Riverside, Pascagoula, has called Tracy Martin as pastor. Martin comes from First, Imboden, Ark.

Calvary, Bogue Chitto, has called Jeff Freeman as youth minister. Freeman comes from Pleasant Grove, Brookhaven.

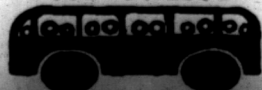


Jones and wife

First Church, Ridgeland, has called Donnie Jones as minister of students. Jones previously served as minister of students and children at Liberty, Waynesboro.

North Long Beach Church, Long Beach, has called Charles Bonner as pastor. He and wife Judy previously served at Poplar Springs Church in the Newton Association.

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1. Thirty-five students from William Carey College's (WCC) Hattiesburg and Gulfport campuses received the Who's Who Among Students in American Universities and Colleges recognition as national outstanding leaders. Students named this year are Logan Abbott of Townsend, Tenn.; Janelle Austrom of Surrey, Canada; Rebekah Berry of Silver City; Kelly Dabbs of Meridian; Joseph Driver of Loxley, Ala.; Annalyn Eakes of Seminary; Matthew Jones of Mendenhall; Stephanie Lowery of McLain; Meagan Odom of Grand Bay, Ala.; Venecia Paul of Jamaica; Joy Stodghill of Waynesboro; Lucien Weber of Walker, La.; Connie King of Mendenhall; Angela Kittrell of Bassville; Tammy McNabb of Foxworth; Ashley Mayo of Sallis; Jessica Ducote of Mandeville, La.; Daniel Henly of Kiln; Dana Ladner of Pass Christian; Sandra Peranich of Saucier; Michele Rodriguez of Biloxi; Stacy Seal of Long Beach; Camelia Shambley of Ocean Springs; Katrina Cox, David Kittrell, and Kathryn Brown of Laurel; Michael Doss, Edwina Prude, Vanessa Quarterman, William Rivero and Shirley Charles of Hattiesburg; and Eryn Greech, Denise Mott, and Jennifer West of Gulfport.

2. William Carey College will host the 21st annual Conference on the Elderly



7. WCC Star Chapter Award Winners

Mississippian with a Mental Handicap April 29 in Smith Auditorium, Hattiesburg Campus, 8:45 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Registration forms are available at the Library of Hattiesburg, or contact Paul Cotton at (601) 318-6416. Fee is \$25, or \$30 at the door.

3. Blue Mountain College will hold its 132nd annual commencement exercise on May 7 at 10:00 a.m. in Moderna Lowrey Berry Auditorium. Eighty-three students from Alabama, Arkansas, Tennessee, Mississippi, and Russia will be graduating. Mississippi Supreme Court Justice Kay Beevers Cobb will present the commencement address.



Cobb

4. The William Carey College Guitar Ensemble will perform a concert featuring the works of Cole Porter May 3 at 7:30 p.m. in the Smith Auditorium on the Hattiesburg campus. The concert is open to the public admission free.

5. Students from the Winters School of Music at WCC advanced to the final round of competition at the Mississippi Chapter of the National Association of Teachers of Singing held recently at Hinds Community College, including Lacey Cofield, Wiggins; Katrina Cox, Laurel; Sadie Magadan, Chisago City, Minn.; Sharnwanika Cotton, Tylertown; and Brad Stephens, Columbia. Marlee Lee, a Carey Institute for Fine Arts (CIFA) student and a

junior at Petal High School placed third in the high school women's division. Allanda Small, a 1998 graduate of WCC and a current doctoral student at USM, placed second in the graduate women's division and received the Governor's Award for most promising singing professional.

6. Mississippi College commencement ceremonies scheduled for May 2005: Graduate School Commencement will be May 6, at 7:30 p.m. in Swor Auditorium; Undergraduate Commencement will be May 7, at 10 a.m. in A. E. Wood Coliseum; Law School Commencement will be May 13, at 10 a.m. in First Baptist Church, Jackson. Mississippi College President, Lee Royce will confer degrees upon approximately 540 undergraduate, graduate, and law students.

7. Several members of the Mississippi Beta Chapter of the Alpha Chi National College Scholarship Society recently attended the National Convention in St. Louis, Mo. The following WCC students brought back the Star Chapter award: Front, from left, Kimberly Yonge, Kelly Dabbs, Marti Baca, and Patty Amason; back, from left, Brave Dwivedi, Randall Harris (Sponsor), Abe Singletary, and Gareth Bonner.

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SALE STREET BAPTIST CHURCH is seeking a full-time minister of music/worship. Send resume, cover letter and demo/sampling of worship leading to music search committee, P.O. Box 5215, Lake Charles, LA 70606. Job requirements at www.salestreet.org.

SALE STREET BAPTIST CHURCH is searching for a full-time student minister to focus on youth grades 6-12 and college students. Send resume to youth minister search committee, P.O. Box 5215, Lake Charles, LA 70606.

MS POSITIONS

FULL-TIME PASTOR: Send resumes to Parkview Baptist Church, pastor search committee, 2101 MacArthur Drive, Alexandria, LA 71301.

PART-TIME SECRETARY: Summerland Baptist Church in Taylorsville, Miss., is seeking a part-time secretary. Hours will be Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-noon. To receive an application please contact Tim Lee at (601) 729-4402, e-mail timlee@megagate.com or Suzanne Bullock at (601) 498-8226, e-mail sbullock@trustmark.com. Applications should be returned by May 25, 2005.

MINISTER OF EDUCATION/SENIOR ADULTS NEEDED. Send resume to First Baptist Church of Poplarville, c/o minister of education search committee, P.O. Box 191, Poplarville, MS 39470. Or email fbcpopminsearch@bell-south.net no later than May 6, 2005.

WANTED: PART-TIME CHILDREN/YOUTH DIRECTOR at Trinity Baptist Church in Pearl, Miss. Call (601) 939-6622 for information.

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF CHARLESTON, MISS. is currently searching for a full-time minister to youth. We are looking for someone who is a college graduate and who has previous experience working with teenagers. Please send a resume with references to P.O. Box 179, Charleston, MS 38921.

HURTING PASTORS

Editor:

Hats off to Jim Futral for his excellent Directions column, Hurting Pastors, in the April 14 issue of The Baptist Record! We needed to hear what he said. As a pastor covering 48 years, my family and I have personally experienced some of the deep hurt he described.

I am compelled to tell you about my present pastorate, Brodie Boad Church in D'Iberville. I have served there for the past two and a half years, during which time they have allowed me to continue to serve as chaplain to our Gulf Coast casinos, a ministry that God had us begin twelve and a half years ago when casinos first came to Mississippi.

God's people here at Brodie Road Church are the most caring and loving church family I have ever had the privilege to pastor. At times it is almost embarrassing that they take such good care of their pastor and wife (but, we don't want to change that!).

Our small congregation has three families in full time missions ministries. Last year the church gave about 20% to missions. The founding pastor and his wife are members of the church and are a blessing in every way, completely supporting me as their pastor. Often, as many people show up on Wednesday night as on Sunday morning. The people love the Lord and each other, and everyone is genuinely welcome here.

Wow! Could this be a slice of Heaven on earth? My wife and I are truly blessed.

John Landrum
D'Iberville

BIBLICALLY-BASED

Editor:

I was disappointed to read the March 31 letter to the editor entitled, Baptist Tsunami, in the Baptist Record. I respectfully beg to differ with the author. I had the opportunity to attend services at Saddleback Church a few weeks ago. It just so happened to be the week after the Atlanta court shootings and Ashley Smith hostage crisis and right before Easter.

Saddleback may be creative in their approach, but I know first-hand that the message presented that day was Biblically-based and called me to a deeper walk with Christ. I refer you to Saddleback's website <http://www.saddleback.org/flash/believe2.html> to view their statement of beliefs. It looks pretty complete to me including inerrancy of Scripture, total depravity of man, and our own beloved "once saved, always saved" theology.

God is working through the ministry of churches like Saddleback to reach many for Christ both in their communities and around the world. They held 12 packed services over Easter weekend just to accommodate the crowds,

and over 4,000 new believers were born into the Kingdom! How many extra services did your church or mine hold? Our brothers and sisters at Saddleback have found a very effective way to spread the Gospel that is relevant to contemporary society.

Maybe a few more of us should "snatch off our ties" and hold Christian "rock concerts." Wake up, church! Let's stop worshiping our traditions at the expense of reaching a lost and dying world for Christ.

Daryl W. Weaver
Madison

OUT OF LINE

Editor:

In response to the letters to the editor, Never Been Closer, and Where's Love?, in the April 14 edition of The Baptist Record, I feel both were very much out of line. Instead of attacking our brother Vaughn Denton (Baptist Tsunami, letter to the editor, March 31 issue) they ought to be thankful that he has enough love for the Word of God to write as he did.

I believe if one was as well-read in the Word as they should be, they would see the prostitute was not very comfortable when she was confronted about her lifestyle. Also, we go to church to meet with and worship God. Out of love and respect for Him, we should dress in our finest no matter what it might be. I believe the outside of a person reveals much of what the inside is like.

I believe our brother was just sticking up for the "old Southern Baptist way." If people would take a good look, they would see a great loss in church attendance. Thank you, Vaughn Denton and Jenelle Christman (Spread the Gospel, letter to the editor, March 31 issue), for reminding us all of some very important things.

A.R. Garrison
Sardis

NO IN-BETWEEN

Editor:

As a Christian, I write concerning the letter to the editor by Vaughn Denton (Baptist Tsunami, March 31 issue) and those who responded to his letter. First of all, in the letters there is no God-centeredness. God's Word tells us to let all things be done decently and in order (1 Corinthians 14:14). If we see a fellow Christian in error, we are to restore such a one in meekness (Galatians 6:1). If a brother trespasses against you, go to him alone and tell him his fault (Matthew 18:15-17).

Gods tells us not to be conformed to the world (Romans 12:2), but people continue to bring the ways and traditions

of the world into the church. "For I am the Lord, I change not." (Malachi 3:6) "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today, and forever." (Hebrews 13:8). "Love not the things of the world." (1 John 2:15). A friend of the world is an enemy of God. (James 4:4). Jesus tells us to sin no more in John 5:14, and John 8:11.

We must not only tell people about the lord of God, but also the things that bring the wrath of God. Teach no other doctrine (1 Timothy 1:3). Lean not on thine own understanding (Proverbs 3:5). Let us be swift to hear and slow to speak (James 1:19). Deny yourself and follow God. God's way is the only way. Do you love God, or the ways of the world? There is no in-between.

Lynn McCormick
Louisville

GOING TO NICARAGUA

Editor:

Members of Greene Association's West Salem Church will spend a week in Nicaragua for the second year in row, coordinating and executing a multi-faceted mission effort. I have made a seven year commitment to the 15 churches that make up the Baptist Association in the Valley of the Aburto to coordinate revivals and Pastor Leadership Training in this area. The Central American Mission Project (CAMP) has also committed to funding a vocational training center in the region, and the first phase of this project, a sewing school, began classes in February. This training will provide both adults and adolescents with practical skills that they can use to begin a home business or to seek employment in Managua's textile industry.

During this year's trip, CAMP will host eleven revivals in Nicaraguan churches, a four day Pastor's Conference, and the week will conclude with a crusade that is expected to exceed 2000 people in attendance.

In addition to this, CAMP will also be taking a Vacation Bible School team that will minister at the Nehemiah School in Jinotepe, Nicaragua. With an enrollment of 400 children, this four day event will conclude with Family Night, with a projected attendance of over 1000 unchurched people.

The CAMP team will consist of members of West Salem Baptist Church, along with pastors, evangelists, and lay members of other Southern Baptist churches in Mississippi, Alabama, Tennessee, and Florida. If you would like to be a part of CAMP, go to westsalemchurch@tds.net, or call me at (601) 989-3113.

Mark King, pastor
West Salem Church
Richton



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Unsigned letters will not be printed. No multi-copy or form letters will be used.

Each correspondent must include an address and telephone number for verification. In special instances, name may be withheld at writer's request and editor's discretion.


Please include the name of cooperating Mississippi Baptist church where correspondent is a member. (Mississippi Baptists' letters will receive priority when space is limited.)

Letters must be limited to 250 words. All correspondence is subject to editing.

Correspondents should refrain from personal attacks. The opinions expressed in letters to the editor do not necessarily reflect the views of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board.

No more than one letter from any individual will be printed during a three-month period.

When in the judgement of the editor a given issue has received sufficient attention, correspondence dealing with it will no longer be published and a notice will be printed to that effect.



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Connecticut joins homosexual civil union bandwagon

HARTFORD, Conn. (BP) — Demonstrating the progress homosexual activists have made in recent years, Connecticut Gov. M. Jodi Rell signed a same-sex civil unions bill into law April 20, making the state the first to pass such a law without a court mandate.

Rell, a Republican, signed the bill into law shortly after the Connecticut Senate passed the bill 26-8. It previously had passed the House. The new law means that beginning Oct. 1 homosexual couples will be able to join in state-sanctioned unions that grant them most of the legal benefits of marriage.

Connecticut joins Vermont as the only states to legalize civil unions. Massachusetts is still the only state with same-sex marriage, but the laws in Massachusetts and Vermont were court-ordered. The Connecticut bill was passed voluntarily. Another state, California, has domestic partnerships, although they are not as expansive as civil unions. California's law also was passed voluntarily.

"Civil unions are marriage without the name. In fact, it's an attempt by same-sex marriage advocates to cut away at marriage," Dale Schowengerdt, an attorney with the pro-family legal group Alliance Defense Fund, told Baptist Press. "They have publicly stated that the fight won't end with civil unions. It's a gradual chipping away until they ultimately win their prize — which is the name included."

Civil unions are not recognized by the federal government. According to the Associated Press, a homosexual couple in Connecticut wanting a civil union must visit a town clerk's office and fill out a civil union license application. The union ceremony then can be performed by anyone who is sanctioned to perform marriages.



The Connecticut law bucks a national trend against homosexual relationships. Last year alone 13 states passed constitutional amendments protecting the traditional definition of marriage, thus banning "gay marriage." All total, 18 states have passed marriage amendments, and more are certain to follow. They have proven overwhelmingly popular, passing with an average of 70% of the vote. Many of them also ban civil unions. The amendments protect state law against Massachusetts-type court rulings.

Even though the civil unions bill was a loss for pro-family groups, it was not a complete victory for homosexual activists, who had hoped to see the legislature legalize "gay marriage" instead. They were further disappointed when the

bill was amended to define marriage as between one man and one woman.

"Connecticut's legislature has recognized the existence and reality of same-sex families and has stepped up to the plate to provide those families with much-needed protections," Mary L. Bonauto, an attorney with the legal group Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders, said in a statement. "They have not chosen the simplest, fairest way to provide those protections — marriage — but we look forward to the time when Connecticut's same-sex couples will be able to legally wed."

Same-sex marriage may still find its way to Connecticut — even if the legislature and the governor don't want it. GLAD is part of a lawsuit seeking the legalization of same-sex "mar-

riage." Despite the civil unions law, the lawsuit will continue, GLAD officials say. GLAD was the legal organization that successfully sued in Massachusetts and Vermont.

Rell had said she would sign the bill as long as it was amended to define marriage in the traditional sense. While the language is intended to protect the state from a state court ruling, it

likely won't provide much protection. In recent months both California and Washington state have seen their laws protecting the traditional definition of marriage overturned by state judges. The rulings are being appealed. Neither state has a constitutional marriage amendment.

Schowengerdt said the civil unions law itself undermines marriage. "The government gives benefits through marriage because marriage has a great benefit to the state — particularly steering procreation into marriage and creating a stable environment for kids. It has no such interests with civil unions."

Pro-family leaders in Connecticut promised to take the issue to the public when legislators are up for re-election in 2006. "This vote will not be forgotten," Brian Brown, executive director of the Family Institute of Connecticut, was quoted as saying in the Hartford Courant. "If the goal was to push this through in a non-election year, they were 100 percent wrong."

Connecticut is one of eight states involved in gay marriage lawsuits. Conservatives and traditionalists say the lawsuits point to the need for a marriage amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

For more information about the national debate over same-sex marriage, visit <http://www.bp-news.net/samesexmarriage>

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FAMILY BIBLE STUDY

Seek God's Purpose

Genesis 12:1-7, 10-18

By Rick Henson

In Genesis 3 Adam and Eve sinned and God responded distinctly. God removed them from the garden and clothed them in animal skins. This was the first death mentioned in the Bible, for animals had to die to make clothing from their skins. Hebrews 9:22 teaches us that without the shedding of blood there can be no remission of sins. God responded to this sin with a specific redemptive act. In Genesis 4 Cain slew his brother Abel and God punished him and also protected Cain. God responded to this sin with a specific redemptive act. In Genesis 6 the ungodliness of man grew so that God responded with drastic action. He sent a flood upon all the earth, saving only Noah and his family. God

responded to this sin with a specific redemptive act. Then in Genesis 11 man sinned by trying to build a tower to heaven, asserting to be as God. However, there appears to be no specific redemptive act by God. In reality, the remainder of the Bible is God's redemptive act. Man continued to sin, and God called Abram through whose heirs He would send His Son to be the ultimate redemptive act for all eternity.

God called Abram to leave his father's house, his kinfolds, and his country. For his obedience God enlarged Abram's house and goods, made his offspring too numerous to count, and gave him a land of his own. Abram received more than he left. When he left he had no heir. By the end of his life he



Henson

that He would show him. God gave the land of Canaan to his obedient servant. He and his wife left what they knew to go to the unknown. They gave up the comfortable to receive the blessings of God. Abram was nobody in Ur, though God promised to make his name great. Abram was childless in Ur. God blessed him so much that to this day he is still known as "Father Abraham."

Abram trusted God when all evidence was contrary to faith. Hebrews 11:8-11 reads, "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out,

had fathered eight children. At seventy-five years old Abram and his wife Sarai were childless and living in his father's house. Abram left his country of Chaldea where most worshipped fire. God put a fire in Abram's heart instead and God called Abram to a place

not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Romans 4:3-5 reads, "For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." Abram obeyed the Lord, and the Bible tells us that he was saved by this act of obedience.

God promised Abram that he would be blessed, that he would be a blessing, and that God would bless those who bless him. 1 Peter 3:9 teaches, "Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing; but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are there unto called, that ye should inherit a blessing." In order for

us to receive a blessing, we must be a blessing as well. This verse says that we were called to inherit and to give blessings. God blessed Abram and made him a blessing through the same act—the birth of Isaac. Through his son, God would eventually send the ultimately blessing, Jesus Christ through whom all the families of the earth would be blessed. God desires the same for us today. He desires to make us a blessing to others, and He will bless us through our being a blessing.

God began His redemptive act on earth by calling a man who would be obedient. God continues His redemptive act on earth by calling men and women who will share His good news, minister to others, and be a blessing to as many as possible. Are you willing to be obedient like Abram, to leave the comfortable for the unknown? It's not faith until you are out of your comfort zone.

Henson is pastor of Oakdale Church, Brandon.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Heed God's Word

Jeremiah 36:1-4, 14-16, 22-30

By Billie Buckley

"Describe the activity so the listener or reader knows what's going on. Always give the score. Tell them who has the ball and how much time is left."

Good advice given to a popular sports announcer many years ago. It's still good advice to follow as we continue in the book of Jeremiah. Today we will take picture after picture so others can see clearly what is happening.

What's going on is not a pretty picture. The time is just before the fall of Jerusalem. The score seems to be Jeremiah — 0, Bad King — 82. The Bad King has the "ball." He is cutting up and throwing God's Word into the fire. There is not much time left, or so it seems.

First Picture: Let's look at higher knowledge reminding us to heed His Word. (vv.1-4)

Preacher, teacher, student, we can not heed it if we do not read it. Perhaps we don't teach it or preach it or live it with authority because we are satisfied with biblical ignorance in our classes and churches.

This was not so with Jeremiah who was born to write. In these verses God's warnings came though the written word. You do know nothing in human situations is left out of the Bible? Jeremiah experienced most of them.

The written picture of judgment prophecies was to encourage the nation. They were to look at the picture Jeremiah took for them and



Buckley

then repent. The preparation of the book and its reading was a motivational act of Divine love. There would have been rejoicing in heaven if God's Word had been obeyed by His people. Their great need was not for information, but for transformation. This is the primary purpose of God's Word even today.

Second Picture: Let's look at the power of God's Word to disturb us or to settle us. (vv.14-16) The choice is yours. God offers to each of us the choice between pictures of quietness or disturbance. Choose one — you can't have both at the same time.

In verse 15 we read, "Sit down. Read it to us, please." The officials responded with a big case of fear. Here we see the power of God's Word to disturb. When is the last time it disturbed you or me?

As we focus on reading the Word and unsettled thoughts harass, we can know to do one

thing. Resist and refuse to adopt the unsettling thoughts not of the Lord. Don't treat the disturbance lightly. Stay close to God and His Word. The more dependent we are on Him the fewer the attacks will be. Greater will be the power of His Word in us and through us than the evil in our world.

Third Picture: Let's look at the results of holding God's Word in contempt. (vv. 22-25, 29-30)

In these verses, that which God valued (His Word) was thrown into the fire! As we focus on this next picture we hear King Jehoiakim say to his official, Jehudi, "Read three or four more columns."

Immediately the king would take his knife and cut the reading off the scroll and throw it into the fire. This was followed by, "Read some more." Time and time again, with no signs of remorse or fear or repentance this happened until all was destroyed. The king would not listen. Never mind: God has no problems, only plans.

God then told Jeremiah, "Get another scroll and write it again. Do it over."

Jeremiah did exactly what he was told, but only this time he added much more. (Don't you love that?)

On one hand, each circumstance in life sits for us as a picture to interpret. On the other hand, we have an interpreter. He is the Holy Spirit who comes and describes the indescribable for us. His words become ours as we try to make sense out of the picture. If only we would look at the pictures of life through His eyes.

Today we need to be like Jeremiah. Don't let others have the last word about the picture of your circumstances. Listen to God. He might be saying:

"Do it over. Paint it again. Write it once more."

"Get up. Move on. Don't look back."

"Well done, my good and faithful friend. We won!"

Buckley is a member of Petal Harvey Church, Petal.

Guidelines for submitting news and photographs

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

News submitted for publication in The Baptist Record must be either (a) typewritten, (b) neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper, or (c) neatly printed on standardized forms provided by the newspaper. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone.

News may be submitted electronically to the address below, and must be contained in the message segment of an e-mail form. Due to increasing virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the **who, what, when, where** details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs may be color or black and white. Instant photos and digital printouts

are not reproducible. Digital photos may be used if submitted as a JPEG file via either (a) e-mail, (b) three-and-a-half inch floppy disk, or (c) CD. Photos must be clear, sharp, and well-lighted.

All news items are subject to editing,

and all photographs are subject to cropping. Photographs must depict people. No landscape-, building-, or object-only photographs will be printed. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date.

Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis. Requests to return photographs must be accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

Submit news and photographs to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org.

THE BAPTIST
Record

Mohler statement rattles Colorado senator

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — Colorado Democratic Senator Ken Salazar has asked James Dobson, founder of Focus on the Family (FOF) in Colorado Springs, Co., to distance himself from R. Albert Mohler Jr., a member of the FOF board and president of Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky., for calling the Roman Catholic church a "false church."

Dobson and Mohler, though, said it should not be surprising that Catholics and evangelicals disagree on theological issues in light of the Protestant Reformation more than four centuries ago. They also noted that Catholics and evangelicals agree on a host of cultural issues.

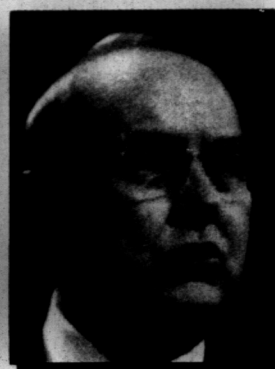
The exchange came two days before Christian conservatives gathered at Highview Church in Louisville, Ky., for Justice Sunday — a rally in which conservatives called on the Senate to end the filibustering of President Bush's judicial nominees.

Pro-family leaders charge that the judicial filibusters have targeted people of faith and have been anti-Catholic. Salazar and other Democrats have hotly disputed that assertion, and Salazar himself sent a letter April 21 to Focus on the Family's Dobson.

"I have not encountered any feelings of anti-Catholicism from any of my fellow Senators on either side of the aisle," Salazar, a Catholic, wrote. "... In contrast, I



Mohler



Dobson



Salazar

understand you are helping lead the effort on a national telecast against Democrats in the United States Senate with Dr. Al Mohler, among others. In March of 2000, Dr. Mohler said, 'I believe that the Roman church is a false church and it teaches a false gospel. And indeed, I believe that the pope himself holds a false and unbiblical office.'

Salazar called on Dobson to "repudiate" Mohler's comments and to distance himself from those who "serve to divide the world's Christian churches against one another." Salazar also called Focus on the Family's tactics "un-Christian." Focus has run advertisements pressuring senators — including Salazar — to stop filibustering nominees.

In response to Salazar's letter, Dobson released a statement calling Mohler a "valued member" of Focus on the Family's board of directors.

"It certainly shouldn't come as a surprise that Protestants and Catholics have significant theological differences that date back to the Reformation," Dobson said. "However, it should also be clear that Focus has expressed deep appreciation to the Catholic church for its unwavering defense of the sanctity of human life, the institution of traditional marriage, and other fundamental moral issues, and that we will continue to do so. That hardly qualifies us as 'an un-Christian movement' that would 'defend immorality,' as you alleged in your news conference."

In a statement April 22 Mohler said his views mirror the facts of church history. "My statements reflect nothing more than classic evangelical theology. Anyone who is shocked that evangelical Christians and Roman Catholics disagree on fundamental theological doc-

trines is simply unaware of four centuries-plus of church history. I can't really believe that Senator Salazar is completely ignorant of the fact that evangelicals and Roman Catholics hold such disagreements.

"Not only do evangelicals hold concerns about the Roman Catholic Church, but the Roman Catholic Church, even in writings by the newly elected Pope Benedict XVI, make the same point clear from the other side."

Mohler added that he and millions of other evangelicals agree with the Catholic Church on issues such as abortion, euthanasia, and the integrity of marriage.

"The real anti-Catholicism at stake here is the use of code language by senators who oppose President Bush's nominees," Mohler said. "When former Alabama Attorney General William Pryor is opposed because of his 'deeply held personal beliefs,' that is authentic anti-Catholicism. Mr. Pryor simply believes what his church teaches — something that assuredly cannot be said of several liberal U.S. senators."

"Sen. Salazar's statements about me are evidence of political panic. His 'divide-and-conquer' tactic will not succeed. His claims are evidence of either gross manipulation or abysmal ignorance. Only he knows which is the case."

UCLA study: students seek spirituality

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — As many as 80% of college students are interested in spirituality and 74% claim to have discussions about the meaning of life with friends, according to the latest study by the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) Higher Education Research Institute.

"College students appear to put a premium on their spiritual development," said Alexander Astin, co-principal investigator for the project. "They are clearly very interested in these larger questions in life, and many of them hope that the college experience will support them in their spiritual quest."

"The challenge for higher education is to understand the priority young people place on these issues and explore how well they are supporting their students' quest."

The study, based on a survey of 112,232 freshmen at 236 colleges and universities conducted last fall, found that students are searching for deeper meaning in their lives, looking for ways to cultivate their inner selves, seeking to be compassionate and charitable and deciding what they believe about social and global issues.

Of the students surveyed, 76% are searching for meaning and purpose in life, 81% attend religious services, 80% discuss religion or spirituality with friends, 79% believe in God and 69% pray.

Pope's status reviewed by Southern Baptist scholars

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — While the world's attention focused on the Vatican as a new pope was elected April 19, the evangelical outlook toward the Roman Catholic Church's top leader stood firm.

Amid expressions of appreciation for the conservative moral views of Joseph Ratzinger, the German cardinal who was elected as the 265th pope of the Roman church, various evangelical leaders reiterated their disagreement with Catholicism's papacy from a biblical standpoint.

"Evangelicals do not find any biblical warrant for the office of the papacy or the elaborate structure of the Roman Catholic Church," Daniel Akin, president of Southeastern Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C., told Baptist Press.

"Further, the Catholic system's emphasis on merit, works salvation and veneration of Mary and the saints are issues that those committed to 'sola scriptura' could never endorse or affirm," Akin continued. "While we can appreciate the moral stand on life and marriage of the papacy, we will resolutely maintain that our High Priest is Jesus Christ in whom we have direct access to the true and living God."

Mark DeVine, associate professor of theology at Midwestern Seminary in Kansas City, Mo., noted, "As Protestants and evangelicals, we deny any special authority to the pope or any other religious leader. We insist that all things be tested by Scripture. We accept the authority of Scripture over all human authority — as evangelicals and even more so as Protestants. We stand under the Word of God."

Ken Keathley, associate professor of theology at New Orleans Seminary and associate dean of graduate studies, noted that Roman Catholics base the doctrine of the

papacy "on the belief that the bishop (or in evangelical terminology, the pastor) of Rome inherits the position and authority of the Apostle Peter. This, Catholics believe, makes the Roman bishop the 'Father' or 'Pope' over all other bishops and their respective churches."

"In contrast," Keathley told Baptist Press, "Baptists affirm the authority and autonomy of the local church under the lordship of Christ through the guidance of His Spirit."

"History demonstrates that the consolidation of authority into the hands of one person, no matter how well meaning that person may be, can result in the abuse of power," he said.

Keathley added, however, "Cardinal Ratzinger, the recently elected pope, has taken the name Benedict XVI. He oversaw the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith, which in centuries past was the infamous Office of the Inquisition. His namesake, Benedict XV, strongly advocated peaceful relations between nations during the chaotic years of World War I. Evangelicals pray that the new pope will similarly promote peace while standing firm on moral issues."

Christendom had no pope at the time of Christ's death and resurrection. Nor did the pope's authority ever extend to the various branches of Eastern Orthodoxy in subsequent centuries. The papacy's devel-



Benedict XVI

opment spanned several centuries, with the first dates attached to the papacy, as recounted in the Westminster Dictionary of Church History, revolving around Pope Leo the Great in the fifth century.

Stephen Wellum, associate professor of theology at Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky., noted, "The main biblical text that is appealed to [for papal succession] is Matthew 16. However this text, while acknowledging the foundational role of Peter and the apostles, says nothing about Peter's successors, the infallibility of those successors, or their exclusive authority."

"What the New Testament shows instead is that Peter is the first to make the formal confession of who Jesus is and that he is at best a 'first among

equals,' but in no way does this text establish papal authority and apostolic succession. This is certainly borne out in the New Testament where Jesus, among the apostles, did not leave one superior authority over the others, but left a group of 12 who were equal in governing authority, and from them comes the authoritative Scripture which unpacks for us the full revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ (see Heb. 1:1-3 and Eph 2:20)."

"That is why Baptists argue that the foundation of the church is Christ Jesus Himself, rooted in his inspired, infallible and inerrant Word, and it is that Word which demands our allegiance, loyalty, and commitment," Wellum said.

"As important as the Roman Catholic Church is and as important as the pope is in the Roman Catholic Church, the papacy's claim to be the vicar of Christ on earth has no biblical support."